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## SECOND ROUND TABLE LUNCHEON

MR. VEILLER presiding

Tuesday, June 6, at 1 o'clock

MR. HARTMAN:

We in Boston are in the hands of politicians. I do not know that this is interesting, or that it will help you to know what we are doing.

Our housing maintenance work is in the hands of our board of health, and our board of health is in the hands of our mayor, and our mayor is anti-social in practically every sense. He is more interested in building up his political machine than he is in promoting the development of men and women. For the last five years he has controlled the situation there, although there was an interim when he was not mayor.

We have a board of health of three doctors. One I might call an anthropological doctor. One was a veterinary surgeon, and later became a man doctor; and the last one is a horse doctor out and out. That has a peculiar significance when you know the inside. Our finance commission spoke to the mayor a short time ago and said that he ought to appoint a sanitary expert, because conditions in Boston were very unsanitary. He replied that he could not get one, that he had tried five or six and they all refused. To answer his argument some of us went to the commission and said we would get a man. The commission said it would not suggest one man alone, but that if we could get five or six to consent to serve if appointed it would present the names. Within five days we secured the names of six men, any one of whom would be anywhere recognized as an expert. Then the mayor appointed the veterinary surgeon.

MR. HOWARD STRONG, Assistant Secretary, Chamber of Commerce, Cleveland:

I have heard various delegates tell of their efforts to get city officials to do this, that or the other. We have a little different

situation in Cleveland, and I have been asked by two or three people to tell of it. With a few exceptions we have a little family affair in Cleveland. For instance, on our board of health, four out of six of the members during the past year either were at the time, or had been, members of our housing committee or of our committee on municipal sanitation, which is closely allied with it. The health officer, Dr. Ford, was appointed at the suggestion of members of our committee on municipal sanitation. The present head of our tenement division was appointed at the suggestion of our housing committee. The building department advisory commission includes as its chairman the vice-chairman of our housing committee. Mr. Marani, the building inspector, is a part of the inner circle and is a very close member of the family. The city solicitor, who will have charge of the prosecutions in this division, was formerly a member of our committee on municipal sanitation; he has offered to assign a prosecutor for this work, and there is no question that his instructions will be followed by the prosecutor, and will be correct. One of the police judges, before whom many cases will be tried, is a former member of our committee. At the end of this year he will be superseded, the police court judges will be succeeded by the municipal court, and those judges will try our violation cases. They will be elected under a law written by the chamber of commerce, and we shall have little difficulty in getting some attention from them.

The director of the charities and corrections of the city, Mr. Jackson, is at present a member of the housing committee, and some of the most influential members of the council are members of the chamber and are in sympathy with it. When the whole family decides upon a thing, it is done. It remains only to get the members of the family together, and since most of them are the same sort of people as there are in this room, there is little difficulty in getting them together on any question.

The day before yesterday we discussed the definition of a tenement house. Cleveland did not say anything about it then, because she could not, but she can now. I have here a copy of the proposed Cleveland code, which, it is needless to say, is based upon the same old model, that is, the New York code.

The definition provides that a tenement house shall include a house occupied by two or more families. When I brought this down I did not know whether it would go through or not, because Mr. Marani was not with us. He now tells us that he will stand for this definition; he is the only remaining member of the family who was not with us, and although he does not know it, the principal reason he came down was to be convinced on that point. Without any question that will go through. As I say, most of the city officials are members of our little family, and when they are not members we usually try to educate them and bring them into our circle. For instance, Miss Chadsey sent one of her inspectors over to the chamber of commerce office, and when he went back he said: "I wish you'd send me over there again; that's a pretty fine place."—"Why is that?"—"They treat you so all-fired fine there."—"What do you mean?"—"Well, I will tell you; it makes a rough-neck like me realize what an old goob he is anyway, and makes him want to do better." I should suggest the family method of dealing with all the "rough-necks" and "goobs."

MR. DAVIS:

We have been trying the family method in Columbus. While we have not been able to do things so successfully as in Cleveland, the method has worked passably well, except in relation to the members of our board of health, who are not progressive.

A good deal has been said here by representatives from different cities regarding the conditions in their home cities, sometimes contrasting them rather favorably with those found here. I do not think that those of us living in Columbus desire to do that. We are willing rather to face our sins, and to repent of them; the remembrance of them is grievous unto us. We have unsanitary tenements and unsanitary small houses. We have some conditions that we should be much more ashamed to have you see than those you have shown us here, the difference being that your tenements are five stories high and ours are three and four. There is one encouraging feature about it all, and that is that the people have discovered it and are bound to have something done about it.

There are two features about the work there that I think are worthy of mention. One is that we have attempted to make our laws apply to the smaller houses. If we had not made our housing code provide for the single and double house, we should have failed to reach at least half of our bad conditions. There was no question about it; we simply could not stop with the tenements. We had to look after the small house, and we did so.

Another thing in Columbus has been done recently, and that is to provide for municipal collection of all ashes, rubbish and stable manure. That is quite a step forward, we believe. Some of you who are planning that work may be interested to know that a company offered to make a ten-year contract for the use of the stable refuse, which would cover all expense of collection. The city council has appropriated the money, and collections are now being made. We have some of those mountains of ashes in the back yard, as we have had no collections of ashes and rubbish except those for which scavengers were paid.

I fear some may have drawn the conclusion from remarks that I have made that we have the dirty foreign family in our small house. I want to correct that. It is not they who are making the trouble in Columbus, but the degenerate native-born Ohioans. I want to say this, not because the foreigner is never dirty, but because we have just as dirty American people.

I want to pay my respects to Chicago for the things that she did in setting the standard at two families, and for keeping the height of non-fireproof buildings down to three stories. I believe that if we could not have swung as a club that "Chicago did it, and if they can do it there why cannot we do it in Columbus," we should not have been able to do these things ourselves, but we have got them now and we are glad of it.

MR. FRANCIS M. KENNEDY, Chairman Board of Health, New Bedford, Mass.:

We are proud of our city, and we never throw it down. We collect garbage and ashes in New Bedford, and we think we do it well. We get many points from Boston, too, and our board of health is efficient. I dislike to contradict flatly anything that

has been said, because I do not want to sound a jarring note, but I do know that the Boston board of health has been effective.

MR. BERNARD J. NEWMAN, Secretary Housing Commission, Philadelphia:

In some ways Philadelphia has the best type of housing to be found in the United States. In 1895 the tenement law was passed which made it practically impossible for the tenement type of building to be constructed; for all buildings over four stories have to be fireproof. We cannot have the monstrosities which you have here in New York. This law came at the right moment, for it checked the construction of buildings of many stories and caused the builders to keep on developing the small dwelling. We have, therefore, some 200,000 small dwellings and less than 10,000 tenements. You are all familiar with Miss Parrish's article setting forth these facts.

But we have our housing problem, although our people are housed in small buildings; there is no law governing the small building, in so far as an inspection is concerned. The result is that we have vile sanitary conditions, surface drainage to the building line and to the street; we have the iniquitous privy vault and thousands of yard toilets; we have houses built on the rear lot and dilapidated buildings. One block which we set in model for a city-planning conference had one hundred and fifty-five houses, sixty-five of which were rear houses, some of them built on alleys three, five and eight feet wide. They are of the horizontal tenement type, or as some one has called them, of the band-box type, one room to a floor, and three floors high. Police supervision of the alleys on which these are built is bad. Crime is prevalent. But our particular problem is one of sanitary inspection. We need a housing code which will do for Philadelphia, what I think we are all expecting the Columbus housing code will do for the small houses there.

MR. GRANGE SARD, President Albany House Building Co., Albany. N. Y.:

We in Albany did not start early with the housing problem. It was only this last winter that we were successful in getting

Mr. Veiller to come to Albany, wake us up and start a feeling that we must have organization and do something. I think the function of the National Housing Association is not simply to accomplish results here in New York but to awaken us all over the country.

We have been undertaking in Albany, first, to change our local laws so that we may rectify the great evils existing in the houses built for one family and turned over to three and four families; and next, to correct the sanitary requirements. We have also organized a company to build small houses, for one family preferably, on the outskirts of the city. The houses that we build we will rent or sell at cost. We are trying to establish homes. We have no conditions there such as you have in New York, we have no large tenement houses and we are trying to build houses as cheaply as possible, and to get into smaller houses the people who live in tenements originally intended to be occupied by only one family.

MRS. BACON:

The amateur housing reformer is, I think, much like the man who let the imp out of the bottle, and after he got it out could not manage it or get it in again. That is one reason we come here, to find out what to do with it. We come here, too, to tell our troubles, and to get help and sympathy.

I want to warn anybody making a tenement law to arrange to leave the city immediately after, because it is no joke to go back to your own town and meet all the consequences; to have plans brought to you for inspection, and to have the friends you meet at teas and in church come to you and say: "We set our hearts on building our flats a certain way, but of course, if it is not in accordance with your law we would not do it, and we are trying to be open-minded, and see things your way." I met a woman in a street car who said, "I hear you were looking at our houses. They are all right, though, just the nicest kind of single houses. We wanted to build flats, but we couldn't, under your law, so you will find they are all right." It took my breath, because I didn't know she was building any houses. It's no joke when you cannot go abroad without having your actions watched.

There is one encouragement I can offer to all housing reformers. If they persevere and succeed, they will be entitled to an epitaph something like this:

"This stone was raised by Sarah's lord,  
Not Sarah's virtues to record,  
For they're well known to all the town,  
But it was raised to keep her down."

MR. S. P. WITHROW, Cincinnati:

Cincinnati has not grown much, but it will continue to grow, I am hopeful. We have in Cincinnati apparently a good tenement-house code that was gotten up by several of the organizations uniting there. But to have a code and to have it effective are two different things. We are using every means possible to bring influence to put that code into force, and when we do Cincinnati will begin to grow and look up and look better.

I feel that much educational work must be done before we ask our city officials to do this thing and that thing, even to the extent of enforcing a law upon the statute books. We have in Cincinnati an anti-tuberculosis league, and the members appreciate how much housing has to do with tuberculosis and the death rate. They have taken a personal interest in this conference and in its work.

I have in the hands of the printer in Cincinnati a circular that we are going to distribute through the agency of the industrial insurance companies, intended to enlighten the tenement-house dweller as to what are his rights and duties. We tell him that his liability to tuberculosis to-day is twelve times as great in the slums of Cincinnati as it is in other portions of the city, and then we proceed to tell him why it is, and to talk about dirt and lack of plumbing and drainage, and bad water and vault conditions. We take each subject separately and tell him its bearing upon the subject, and then we tell him the law. If these men know the law, the public officials will have to enforce it. That is our method of procedure in Cincinnati. The Anti-Tuberculosis League is also making a strong endeavor to have the board of health budget double what it is at the present time. They have not enough inspectors, and neither has the department of health,



so we are trying to have the inspectors in each department increased. We feel that in Cincinnati we are on the way to have something done.

MRS. J. D. HAMMOND, Nashville, Tenn:

Housing reform in Nashville is not yet beyond its initial stage; we are just beginning to investigate.

The peculiarity of the housing situation in the South is that our slums are not confined to the cities. We have them all over the country as well as in the city. Wherever you find negroes you find slums; and you find slums among the immigrants in our coal fields and our lumber camps.

I thought yesterday, when it was said that the bottom of the housing question was the education of tenants, that it was not so with us. In Nashville I am told that some of the slum tenement property nets the landlord as high as twenty per cent. The way to deal with the problem is not simply to educate the tenants; the community must be educated; the landlord must be educated sometimes before we can do very much with him; and it is an educational campaign through the South that the women whom I represent are hoping to start. There are 100,000 of them in the Southern Methodist Church; we are well organized and we have societies in nearly every southern town and village. We have been doing social service work and settlement work for more twenty years, and we think the time has come to take up these great questions and try to coöperate, not merely with other churches, but with women's clubs and any other social or philanthropic organizations that exist.

The first thing, we believe, is to learn conditions. We intend that our women in these places shall see what the housing conditions are in their own immediate vicinity, and see what they are for black people as well as for white. We stand, as southern people, squarely on the ground that the negroes and the white people must keep apart socially always; but we do see that underneath race separation there is a community of interest that goes deeper than any separation ever can, and that the welfare of the two is bound up together; and that we cannot have the kind of communities that we should have in the South

until the negroes and their children, just as much as the white people, have an opportunity to grow up in moral and physical strength.

MR. TODD :

Lawrence is a mill city of about 86,000 in Massachusetts, on the Merrimac River. It is fortunate in having a long-established philanthropic fund, known as the White Fund. In June, 1907, one of the trustees of this fund had some correspondence and conferences with Mr. Robert A. Wood, the object being a social survey of Lawrence. The matter fell through until last summer, when, at the suggestion of Mr. Clark Carter, whose work is like that of charity organization in Lawrence, the trustees again took up the matter and secured Mr. Frances H. McLean for advice and adopted his report. In it he suggests that the examination for this year have as its principal subject housing, and as its minor subject health and general sanitation. The housing examination began last January and will be comprehensive. Six half blocks, the most crowded in the city, have been examined, and a partial examination has been made on another method, making special studies of certain types of houses scattered in the semi-circular district lying around the mercantile district. The result of this housing examination will be ready in the early fall.

Lowell has had a social survey made by one man, one of the pastors, which covers several topics and has an exceedingly interesting chapter on housing. The copy will be with the Macmillans within a few weeks, and it is expected to be published early in the fall.

Haverhill, though a city of only 44,000, has caught the spirit of these two cities which are so near. It has a federation of men's clubs, which organization I am told is responsible for the fact that Haverhill was the first city in New England to adopt the commission form of government. This federation has recently passed a resolution to raise money for a social survey in Haverhill.

MR. L. A. HALBERT, Board of Public Welfare, Kansas City, Missouri :

In 1907 Kansas City passed a so-called local code based largely on the underwriters' code, and appointed a tenement commission with an investigator. Their investigator worked nearly a year, and during that time secured considerable improvement in houses so far as he was able to go, investigating something like one thousand houses. He had about forty houses torn down and a large number of houses repaired.

Then the political aspect of the government changed, and later, while the tenement commission existed nominally, they did not have any fund to employ an investigator; but a year ago a board of public welfare was established and the work was passed over to that board. The board has been carrying on an investigation during the past year with four or five investigators, and they have inspected carefully, going into as much detail as you saw exhibited on the cards at the office of the New York tenement-house commission, inspecting in that detail about six thousand houses. The president of the board of public welfare warned us that the city did not care much about the investigation, and wanted to know what the investigation was for, and whether we intended to do anything about the things that we found. We are in the same situation that the tenement commission was, namely that our function has been to make complaints and lodge them with the health department and the building department. We have placed something like two thousand complaints, some of them probably not coming within the law; but over six hundred houses, to our knowledge, have been improved, some at an expense of several hundred dollars, so we assume that over twenty-five thousand dollars worth of improvements have been made in housing conditions as the result of this work which cost about \$3,500.

The division of the work between the investigators of the board of public welfare, the board of health and the building department is not always easy to draw, but in a general way the condition of old houses is turned over to the board of public welfare, whereas the construction of new houses is left to the oversight of the building department, and we have compara-

tively few rooms that cannot have light and air, with the people using the facilities that are at hand. We have many complaints in regard to sanitary conditions. The remarks of the gentleman from Columbus in regard to the new system instituted there for gathering garbage and refuse reminds me that the City Club of Kansas City has to-day as its speaker at the noon luncheon the gentleman who has charge of the gathering and disposition of the refuse of Columbus, to tell us how we should do it there. That really is one of our pressing problems. Our water and sewerage system has not been extended to nearly all the houses even in the older parts of the town, because the owners say that the houses are not worth the cost of modern plumbing. If a house is not worth modern plumbing it is not good enough for people to live in.

MISS VIRGINIA MCMECHEN, Charity Organization Society,  
Seattle:

Seattle has a population of 285,000. Across the bay stands the city of Tacoma with a population of 85,000. These two cities, so close together, comprise a joint population of 370,000.

Seattle is mainly a city of frame buildings, although brick and stone are rapidly being substituted, especially in the business sections. Seattle has no tenements in the strict sense of the term. It has, however, a housing problem. Many of our old residences are being converted to tenement uses. Several families are frequently found living in one building and the "lodger evil" is rapidly on the increase. Seattle has a large transient population, and many of its old rooming houses are questionable from the standpoint of good housing conditions. We have an excellent board of health with about twenty sanitary inspectors. Several years ago, during a bubonic plague scare, the board of health took radical measures in the extermination of rats. At this time two incipient slum districts were completely burned down. These districts lay along the water front in what is known as the tide flats. The tenants of these old shacks were given about two months to vacate. Most of them found homes, without charitable assistance, in other sections of the city.

An important factor in the Seattle housing problem is what is known as the regrade. It consists in the leveling of many of the hills on which the city now stands. This is done chiefly by hydraulic process. Many of us think that it would add to the beauty of the city if these hills were landscaped rather than razed. The point about the regrade that particularly interests the housing reformer, however, is that several incipient slum districts have been entirely removed by the cutting down of certain hills.

At present the Pacific Coast is facing the greatest emergency in its history. This is the immigration problem which the opening of the Panama Canal will bring to us. Seattle is preparing to meet this problem commercially but as yet our people do not recognize the seriousness of the situation from a social standpoint. We feel that the word "Seattle" is synonymous with the word "opportunity" for the housing reformer.

MRS. GRAY:

I hear that there are some slides showing the Panama conditions. It would be interesting if we could get hold of some photographs of the Panama situation "before and after," for educational purposes.

MR. BALL:

Some of you perhaps may not know that this inquiry of Mrs. Gray comes out of some things I said privately to her about Colon and Panama and Port Limon, three cities which I had the pleasure of seeing in March, and any one of which is cleaner than any ward in the city of Chicago. I also said something about the significance of sanitation on the Isthmus, and particularly the improvements shown in the hospitalization from malaria.

When the American occupation began some years ago one woman out of twenty was taken every week to the hospital suffering with malaria. That hospitalization has come down to one in four hundred. Of course there are other facts perhaps not quite so striking as that, but the general mortality rate on the zone last year, men, women and children, black, white and

yellow, was about the same as the rate in the city of Providence, R. I.,—under sixteen to one thousand.

MR. VEILLER:

We have had the metropolitan sewerage system for about six years past. Some of our best engineers and public-spirited physicians, such as Williams and Sloper, have been trying to deal with the question of polluted harbors, making scientific investigations, showing that the tide does not carry away the sewerage, and that harbors and rivers are filling up. They also made experiments at the mouth of sewers, showing that the infant death rates are much greater near the mouth of the sewers. They caught flies and counted the bacteria on the legs and bodies.

They have also organized an exhibition at our American Museum of National History, the first exhibition of its kind that I know of. The commission has no great powers except of an advisory and research nature. We have been seeking the aid of the War Department of the United States to prevent New Jersey from digging a tremendous new trunk sewer to empty into lower New York harbor. We are also fighting the Bronx sewer system, which was to dump sewage into the river. We are reaching the time when our river is going to have so large a proportion of solids that we can walk on it, rather than swim in it, and we must do something effective about it. What, of course, is necessary, is chemical treatment of sewage before it is emptied into the stream.

MR. JOHN IHLDER, Field Secretary, National Housing Association, New York:

In Wisconsin I believe they are even ahead of New York. They have forbidden towns to dump the raw sewage into the river. The cities that lie around Lake Michigan have entered into an informal union by which they bring together the health commissioners, who have held several meetings. As yet, I believe, they have done nothing very effective, but they have aroused public interest and have educated their communities. In Michigan, one of the towns below Grand Rapids has begun suit against that city for dumping sewage into the river.

MR. BALL:

I think the full significance of the movement for the purification of Lake Michigan has just begun to be seen. The cities that lie around Lake Michigan are in three states, none of which can properly control the pollution of a great body of water, and that means intervention by the federal government.

Seven years ago, in Chicago, there was absolutely no appreciation in the public mind of the ultimate failure of the Chicago drainage canal, carrying the waters of Lake Michigan down the Illinois River, as the means of sewage disposal. Everybody seemed to think that the canal would do forever, but there has now come to exist some appreciation of the fact that that will be impossible as a proper method of disposal for more than a relatively few years. The drainage commission is now spending a great deal of time on the specific problems of the treatment of the sewage of Chicago, so that they will know exactly what to do with that sewage when it can no longer be discharged to the south. The organization of the cities and states bordering on Lake Michigan, with the coöperation of the federal government, to secure the purity of Lake Michigan, is one of those important achievements that have come to pass in the last five years.

MR. ALDRICH:

In Detroit we are at present trying to learn about taking care of ashes and waste. I believe the majority of those interested are at the present time in favor of compelling the householders to build permanant receptacles of either brick or cement inside the lot line so that we can easily handle the contents. There are some opposed. I would like to hear from anyone who has a suggestion to offer.

MR. VEILLER:

I think the whole matter is summed up in this question: Do you want the poor to hoard the garbage or not? In other words, is it a desirable thing to keep that waste upon the premises or is it desirable to get it away at once? It is like the vault question. In the vault they hoard the human excrement, and

we all recognize that that is a bad thing. We want it got away at once, through a system of sewers and closets. The same thing applies to garbage and other forms of waste, especially garbage. As long as the garbage stays there it means the fly, and it means weakened vitality, and it means rats and all kinds of unpleasant, sordid and squalid things. There is no reason, it seems to me, for keeping garbage on the premises for more than a single day.

If a city is so poor that it cannot remove garbage once a day, or once in two days, then it ought to be so arranged that the people can burn it. It is true that there is an unpleasant odor to it when it is burning, but that is preferable to keeping it on the premises.

We saw in St. Louis just what you are proposing, and it struck us as most barbaric, a big masonry vault in which people stored their garbage for five or six months. Why is not the system in vogue in New York perfectly practical for every city in the country? Compel the householder to provide a garbage can of metal, and require that can to have a hinged cover, and then have your street cleaning department—whether you do it yourself as a city or do it by contract—required to remove that garbage once in so often. I would say that the ideal is once a day, and that the absolute minimum is once a week, not once in two or three months or six months.

And I would say further, we all of us ought to lay stress on the point that it is far more important for a town to remove garbage frequently from the tenement district than it is from the best residence districts. They do make pretty frequent removals from those, but it seems that the poor are of no account, and they are permitted to have the stuff accumulate. What practical obstacle except money is there to that scheme?

MR. ALDRICH :

We have a good garbage collecting system. If anyone is skipped more than one week, it is because the driver is sick and a new man is working on that route. In building receptacles they should be large enough to contain the garbage for a certain number of days and the department of public works should



gather it, not allowing it to remain longer than one week in any part of the city. We never could get money enough appropriated to take the garbage every day in all parts of the city. At the present time we take the garbage twice a day from all hotels and restaurants, and down town within the half-mile limits twice a week; outside the mile limit it is taken once a week. We have our alleys, and people think they are for the purpose of taking care of all refuse—ashes and garbage. What we now want is a better receptacle for garbage. There is no trouble about our department taking care of it if it is placed in proper receptacles but at the present time many throw their garbage into the alley. We are bound by contract with the reduction company not to give them garbage with more than 10 per cent of foreign matter in it. As a result much of the garbage is carried out with the alley refuse. I hope some plan may be suggested here to apply to a city with alleys.

MR. VEILLER:

Why would not the system of the metal garbage can about two and a half feet high apply? Keep them in the rear of the lot with a separate can for ashes, if you want it. They can be wheeled out and dumped into a cart.

MR. TUCKER:

It seems to me that in most of our small American cities and communities the two fundamental problems we are struggling with are garbage and sewage disposal. In our little city of New Rochelle on the Sound we are face to face with this situation. The state board of health has notified our city authorities that it will approve of no more sewage-disposal works or main-trunk sewer or sewers of any kind that provide for the dumping of the sewage into the waters of the Sound. That brings us face to face—and we are a rapidly-growing community—with the problem of sewage disposal. We have no sewage-disposal plant, and the majority of our sewage is discharging itself into the Sound. We have a garbage-collection system, but the garbage is not destroyed. It is spread on private land in one district, and when the wind blows from a certain direction the

most expensive portion of our city gets the full benefit of the accumulated flavors. Now we come down to the practical question of how we are going to handle those things under our system of government.

Two years ago, under the then existing administration, a proposition was made for a garbage disposal works. The administration attempted to get a bill through the legislature, on account of our inadequate charter, authorizing the expenditure of a certain sum of money for the building of a garbage disposal works, but the opposition political body did not approve of the system of garbage disposal that they proposed to use. Immediately came the rival claims of rival constructors of garbage disposal works, espoused by rival political parties. We, without technical knowledge, were interested only in having an efficient disposal works, and were willing to provide the money, and we fell between those stools. We have no disposal works to-day.

My practical proposition is the same one I made yesterday afternoon. What we want is authoritative knowledge put out by some disinterested body, similar to the Metropolitan Sewage Commission, and my suggestion is that Mr. Veiller's association make an investigation of the claims of different disposal works, for both garbage and sewage, so that the interested citizens of our communities shall have some authoritative record when the case in dispute comes up as between rival political factions and rival neighborhood factions.